

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 22, 2020;

DATE ISSUED: March 22, 2020; Reissued April 22, 2020

LATEST REVISION: April 22, 2020

SUBJECT: DCF COVID-19 RESPONSE AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

I. PURPOSE

- A. To ensure the Department is taking all appropriate steps to address the public health hazard of COVID-19, including protecting the health and well-being of its employees and clients while continuing to provide critical state services.
- B. To comply with the Executive Orders of Governor Murphy related to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- C. To provide for flexibility in work rules to ensure that its employees can fully comply with all medically appropriate measures while continuing to perform their essential functions.
- D. To communicate modifications to operational standards that impact the delivery of services to the children and families served by DCF.

II. SCOPE AND DURATION

This Order has Department-wide applicability. The duration of this Administrative Order is for 30 days from Commissioner's Signature unless otherwise modified or extended.

III. AUTHORITY

N.J.S.A. § 9:3A-7

N.J. Exec. Order No. 103 (March 9, 2020),
https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html

N.J. Exec. Order No. 104 (March 16, 2020),
https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html

IV. DEFINITIONS

The following term(s), when used in this Order, have the meanings indicated:

"COVID -19" means a mild to severe respiratory illness that is caused by a coronavirus (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 of the genus Betacoronavirus), is transmitted chiefly by contact with infectious material and is characterized especially by fever, cough, and shortness of breath and may progress to pneumonia and respiratory failure.

V. POLICY**A. Work Locations**

1. DCF staff, unless otherwise indicated, will perform their essential functions remotely. Depending on operational need, staff may be contacted to report to the office for periods of time to ensure continued workflow.

B. Screening Procedures for Any Visitors to DCF Worksites

1. All clients and DCF vendors (e.g. CPSAI, CHU nurses, DV liaisons, cleaning crews, etc.) seeking access to DCF worksites must be screened by security personnel as part of the sign-in process.
2. No visitors other than DCF clients or vendors are to be admitted to the worksite. This includes friends, spouses or children of staff.
3. Security guards' screening of visitors shall consist of specific questioning of COVID-19 symptoms and/or potential exposure prior to access to the premises.

C. Internal and External Meetings

1. Internal communication, including staff or unit meetings, shall continue between DCF leadership and staff. Such meetings shall be by phone and video conferencing, as available.
2. All meetings involving external stakeholders to the DCF should be held by conference call, rather than in-person.
3. Any other gatherings of 50 or more persons shall be cancelled or postponed.

D. CP&P Field Response and Operations

1. COVID-19 Response Teams will consist of identified field staff from each of the county local offices, to create an Area Office team who will be responding to referrals screened in by the State Central Registry (SCR) and completing home visits on select cases. Field responses will be based on priority categories.
2. COVID-19 Response Team staff will be provided personal protection equipment and guidance on the appropriate use of such equipment, so that they can safely complete the department's investigative functions during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. All CP&P staff, including staff working remotely, shall continue to document client contacts, remain in routine communication with their supervisors, and participate in all court hearings via phone or video conference on their caseload.

E. Modification to Policies and Standard Operating Procedures

1. Modified caseload standards shall be in effect with limited staff to perform investigations. The caseload standard per caseworker of no more than 8 new investigations per month and 12 total investigations is suspended.
2. Any required or scheduled family team meeting on new and existing cases will be suspended.
3. All in-person parent/child and sibling visitation facilitated by CP&P will be suspended. Phone contact and video conferencing will be preferred and encouraged to maintain contact between parents and children in out-of-home placement. Children that were previously having regular ongoing contact with family may continue in-person visitation if all parties agree and abide by standards to ensure the health and safety of participants.
4. All Minimum Visitation Requirements (MVRs) consisting of in-person face to face contact shall be modified to permit communication through remote technology. Exceptions to having contact with clients require supervisory approval and documentation.
5. The timeframes for completing both in-home and out-of-home case plans are suspended.

F. Children in Placement Exposed to COVID-19

1. If a youth is exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19, the youth will need to self-quarantine at his/her current placement or location. Likewise, for youth in congregate care, if staff and other residents of a program are exposed to COVID-19, there will be a need to quarantine, which will impact operations and new admissions.
2. Decisions on moving children in placement under these circumstances will be made on an individual basis with full communication between CP&P, CSOC, resource parents, the court, and all counsel, as necessary, under the guidance of the NJ Department of Health or local county health departments.

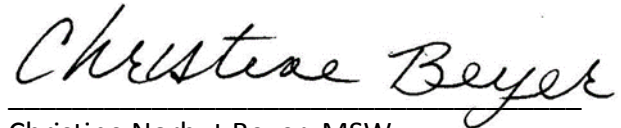
G. Limited Availability of Services and Transportation

1. Due to the pandemic COVID-19, children and families served by DCF will experience disruptions in services, whether court-ordered or voluntary. A significant number of service providers are no longer operating or are operating at reduced capacity. In addition, any collateral information on progress for existing services will be limited.
2. Transportation services provided by CP&P will be suspended.

VI. RESPONSIBILITY AND PROCEDURES

Each Division within this Department is permitted to establish policy in furtherance of the general principles set forth in this Administrative Order and pursuant to and in conformity with federal and state laws and regulations.

Date: April 22, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Beyer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW
Commissioner